

**BROADWAY VALDEZ DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN****Public Workshop #6 – Public Review Draft Plan Concept**

December 8, 2011, 6-8pm

Fellowship Hall, First Presbyterian Church, 2619 Broadway

The sixth round of Broadway Valdez District Specific Plan's public workshop was held on December 8, 2011 at the First Presbyterian Church of Oakland, 2619 Broadway, from 6pm to 8pm. A total of 86 public members attended the meeting to review the Draft Plan Concept for the Plan.

Ed Manasse, Project Manager, opened up the meeting by introducing himself as well as other City staff and the consultant team. He started a PowerPoint presentation briefly introducing the Plan and its process so far as well as some key elements in the Draft Concept. After the presentation, Ed kicked off the open house session and encouraged the public to visit, discuss and leave comments in detail at four different stations: (1) Land Use, including overall land use concept and retail and residential strategies; (2) Community Design, including historic resources and adaptive reuse information; (3) Circulation, Access and Parking, including overall concept as well as some street sections; and (4) Implementation Strategies, which laid out short and long term strategies for the Plan.

After the 45-minute open house session, the public gathered back together for group questions and comments to discuss and share concerns and questions.

**Public:** The plan looks like the proposed street cars on Broadway will replace the existing bus lines. However, you need to consider that the street cars are not flexible in their routes and they cannot go around any obstructions like buses do. Retailers are not so interested in this idea because this will make only some areas flourish and others dead because the street cars cannot reach.

**Staff:** *The fact that street cars cannot go around the obstructions is an important factor to consider. However, street cars and buses don't have to be an either-or situation. We could have both options available for the Plan area – it's a suggestion for now, though we are definitely looking into it.*

**Public:** I'm glad to hear the creative reuse/adaptation option. Adaptive reuse option is greener than demolition of beautiful historic buildings in the area. For example, the reuse of the building on Telegraph Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street, the Muslim community started to come and move in and the neighborhood grew and changed organically with them to contribute to a more diverse neighborhood. Don't want the area to become a condo wasteland and would like an auto supply store.

**Staff:** *We discovered many different possibilities for adaptive reuse for the Plan Area and the Plan talks about the area growing more organically.*

**Public:** Currently, there is no town square for the public to gather in the Area. A natural space for that kind of town square space is the lot where Biff's is located on Broadway and 27<sup>th</sup> Street. It

would be good to have some outdoor active space, such as mini-golf, and sitting-around space, to tie in with the Presbyterian Church's lawn and Webster Street. Also, the more appropriate area for big retail is the block on Broadway between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets. There is a need for the plans to show the historic districts overlaid on the retail priority areas.

**Staff:** *In the previous public meeting, Biff's plaza was proposed at Valdez and 27<sup>th</sup> Street and I think it's a good idea. This area is shown as a public space plaza in the plan. The area for the big retail you mentioned was one of the Retail Priority Areas we suggested.*

**Public:** Currently, there are more pedestrians on the streets within the Plan Area, and improving the streetscape element is really important to keep people coming into the Area. How soon can the streetscape be applied? Improved neighborhood streetscape would bring more people into the area, and would like to have the streetscape completed earlier than the rest of the plan if possible.

**Staff:** *We first need to determine the budget for the short term strategies as well as others, and then we will identify and prioritize different programs to implement, which includes streetscape.*

**Public:** On the addition of street cars, the City just started to study the street cars as "Transportation Alternative Study" and yet bike routes/paths are disconnected on Broadway. I think it's too early to remove bikeways on Broadway.

**Staff:** *The City's Bicycle Master Plan has already determined to have the bikeways travel on Broadway over to Webster Street prior to the Plan. Current bike lanes on Broadway were recommended to move to Webster Street because it has less traffic. Also, we would like to include a street car option since it is a good element in development/retail. We would like to emphasize that the Plan is a long-range project, and also the study is looking at a new type of street car, which does not require the actual tracks on the road – instead it has something installed under the road surface so the street cars are charged electricity and have the ability to go off of the charge for short periods to move around obstructions if any appear, unlike the conventional street cars. Also, the street car is one of many transportation alternatives currently under study, as a development tool, not only as a transportation tool.*

**Public:** Currently, there seems to be no parking counts for existing parking structures and lots, including on-street parking. At least suburban-level parking is needed for destination retail the Plan is trying to bring, and I would rather spend money on streetscapes than to build more parking lots/structure.

**Staff:** *The Circulation, Access and Parking diagram has the existing parking counts on them. They are the numbers on dark grey and pink blocks. Also, the Existing Conditions Report has the entire inventory, including off- and on-street parking. We are also encouraging in the Plan to utilize the existing parking facilities first.*

**Public:** I loved seeing the term “Auto Row” come back to the Plan. They are big tax generators for the City. Aren’t comparison centers the same as shopping centers? How much does this plan cost?

**Staff:** *About three years ago, the City received about \$1M from Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Oakland’s Redevelopment Agency. The grant is paying about 40% of the budget of the Plan. Of course, the Broadway Valdez District Specific Plan is a result that grew from the Retail Strategy Study in Upper Broadway in 2009. The earlier version of the Plan showed the Valdez Triangle with more interventions compared with the current proposal. We are not trying to change the area immediately, and we are not talking about traditional big box retail stores, when we refer to destination retails. We are more and more considering urban retail forms. The goal for this current Plan is to have the natural evolution to retail district in the Area. The City definitely needs larger floor plates of retail and there will be some changes but the Plan is trying to preserve some of what the area has and integrate new retail. The five Retail Priority Areas are proposed because of their accessibility and visibility, which are key characteristics to major retail. Oakland needs some larger buildings or expansion of existing buildings to bring in retail and comparison shopping experience. Also, not all five Retail Priority Areas necessarily have to turn into major retail sites – they are only potential sites that meet the different characteristics and opportunities.*

**Public:** The art districts already are in the area. The Plan area is not near freeways and is still affordable for renters. It is a good neighborhood; let’s not try to destroy the neighborhood. People move into Oakland because it is Oakland, so let’s not try to change what Oakland is.

**Public:** Talking with retailers downtown, they have issues with street parking meters. These street parking meters are discouraging customers to come into their stores. Is there a study on street meters that’s currently underway?

**Staff:** *I am not aware of any study on street parking meters.*

**Public:** A lot has changed since the Plan re-launched. On the five Retail Priority Areas, there is a limitation for minimum floor-plate square footage, which might hinder something to happen. Also, currently 1/3 of the Valdez Triangle is reserved for major retail sites. If they are reserved for major retailers which may not happen in the short term, then this will discourage development and pedestrian traffic will remain with empty lots. I would recommend having two to three Retail Priority Areas rather than five to have something happen while waiting for the big retailers to come.

**Staff:** *The current economic situation has made us think of different ways to activate “dead zones” with interim/temporary uses, like on Octavia Boulevard in San Francisco. The City is considering allowing some temporary activities to activate some areas in the Plan Area.*

**Public:** Have you considered collecting fees on high density to build retail, similar to off set density in an Environmental Study?

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MEETING SUMMARY

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***Staff:** There was a hope to pursue this Plan by land assembling, but now it seems unlikely because of the possible removal of the Redevelopment Agency.*

**Public:** Retail with residential above really doesn't work. The density really needs to increase.

***Staff:** We need to study the coexistence of retail and residential.*

As concluding the meeting, Ed reminded the public that **comments on the Draft Plan Concept is due on Monday, January 9, 2012**. He also encouraged them to send their comments and questions through the project email ([bvdsp@oaklandnet.com](mailto:bvdsp@oaklandnet.com)). Questions can also be asked via the hotline (510-238-7905). For more information on the Plan, visit the Project Website at [www.oaklandnet.com/bvdsp](http://www.oaklandnet.com/bvdsp).

Please send comments on the Draft Plan Concept by **Monday, January 9, 2011** to the City:

via E-Mail (preferred) at:

[bvdsp@oaklandnet.com](mailto:bvdsp@oaklandnet.com)

OR

via mail at:

Attn: Alisa Shen

City of Oakland, Community and Economic Development Agency, Strategic Planning Division

250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 3315

Oakland, CA 94612